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FOR ACTION

RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDITIONAL GENERAL RESOURCES TO FUND THE APPROVED COUNTRY PROGRAMME**

The Niger

SUMMARY

The present document contains a recommendation for additional general resources to fund the approved country programme for the Niger for which the balance of approved general resources is not sufficient to fund the programme up to the approved programme period. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board approve the amount of $4,411,000 in additional general resources for the period 1998 to 1999 to achieve the objectives of the country programme as originally approved by the Board.

* E/ICEF/1998/12.

** The figures provided in the present document are final and take into account unspent balances of programme cooperation at the end of 1997. They will be contained in the "Summary of 1998 recommendations for general resources and supplementary funding programmes" (E/ICEF/1998/P/L.21).

1. The current cooperation programme for Niger was approved by the Executive Board in 1994 for the period 1995-1999 for an amount of $12,200,000 from general resources and an amount of $18,630,000 in supplementary funds (E/ICEF/1994/P/L.10). At the time, the level of annual planning from general resources for Niger, on the basis of the criteria approved by the Executive Board (number of children, per capita gross national product (GNP) and under-5 mortality rate (U5MR)), was fixed at an average of $2,440,000.

2. Since then, because of the continuing high U5MR and the decline in GNP, the planning level of the country programme has gradually been increased to $3,808,000 in 1998 and $4,189,000 in 1999. Consequently, an amount of $4,412,000 is necessary in order to continue to implement the activities required in order to achieve the goals of the country programme as approved by the Executive Board and readjusted following the 1997 mid-term review (summarized in document E/ICEF/1998/P/L.2). A recommendation concerning the country programme for the period 2000-2004 will be submitted to the Board in 1999.

3. The programme for Niger is helping to improve the indicators of the national programme of action for children, including the reduction of maternal and child mortality and to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children. In spite of the persistence of high rates of infant and infant-child mortality, and many constraints, the implementation of the current programme has made it possible to achieve very encouraging results.

4. Thus, 63 per cent of the integrated health centres targeted for revitalization, or 98 centres, are fully operational. In spite of generally low immunization coverage, the national immunization days for the eradication of poliomyelitis have been a success. Real efforts have been made to expand the monitoring of pregnancy and birth and the integration of maternal health activities is being expanded. The rate of assisted births has increased considerably, rising from 22 per cent in 1992 to 37 per cent in 1996.

5. The strategy of combating iodine-deficiency disorders has been accompanied by the training of workers to monitor the quality of food salt (140 technicians, 522 instructors and 400 community workers) and legislation on the trade in iodized salt. Efforts to raise public awareness and to establish an effective border control system have begun. More generally, the effort to combat micronutrient deficiencies is being carried out in an integrated manner as a support for other nutritional activities. In some villages, the grain banks have become a central economic factor.

6. Water and sanitation projects are being carried out in villages with a total population of nearly 100,000; 46 hand-operated wells, 2 small-scale piped-water systems and 93 rehabilitated wells have already been completed, accompanied by community empowerment activities. The dracunculiasis eradication support project has achieved a spectacular 79 per cent reduction in the number of cases recorded between 1994 and 1997. Eradication is probable by the year 2000 if the same effort is maintained.

7. The Education programme has supported 60 schools in the 7 districts targeted for teacher training and retraining. Emphasis has been given to the

educational innovations which have helped to create a new impetus in the field. This has resulted in a steady increase in the proportion of girls enrolled in the targeted schools, which has gone from 27 per cent in 1994-1995 to 32 per cent in 1996-1997.

8. Community initiatives have been strengthened by the creation of basic community empowerment structures. These consist of 111 village community development committees with a total membership of 665, of whom 50 per cent are women, and of 145 women's groups with 870 members.

9. In the social policy area, several studies have been carried out for the purpose of defining policies (study of the 20/20 Initiative and multiple indicator cluster surveys) and activities have been undertaken to support institutional reforms and the preparation of policies (social development, education and health), which has facilitated incorporation of the lessons learned from experience in the field.

10. Implementation of the programme is continuing with the adjustments recommended by the mid-term review (including the strengthening of the convergence and integration of activities). Last March the Government successfully organized a conference in Geneva on the framework anti-poverty programme, with the support of a number of partners including the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF. Cooperation with United Nations agencies, bilateral partners and non-governmental organizations in the various areas of the programme is continuing.

Funding required

(In United States dollars)

Current programme cycle	Approved general resources funding a/	Additional funding proposed
1995-1999	$12,200,000	$4,411,000

a/ The amounts shown here include the actual balances carried over from the preceding programme cycle.